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ABSTRACT

The MD Program is a collaborative, interorganizational, school-based administrator training program at the doctoral level, sponsored by five county school systems in the Baltimore metropolitan area and two campuses of the University of Maryland. After an introductory description of the program and its collaborative decision-making policy, this paper focuses on the procedures that member organizations developed to establish the program on a collaborative basis, and the degree of member satisfaction at three critical points: in the planning stage (1978), 2 years after the program operations began (1981), and 3 years later (1984), after the first cycle of students were finishing their degree requirements. Data were derived from formal interviews, document analysis, and observation of policy board meetings and events sponsored by the program. The perspective guiding this study was that of interorganizational relationship (IOR) theory. A conceptual model is described that (1) directs attention to the pre-setting conditions that contribute to a decision to collaborate and (2) delineates structural, relational and procedural characteristics of successful IORs. Structural characteristics of IORs include: types of coordinating mechanisms (including similarity of mission, size, corporate health, and geographic location); resource contributions; and congruence between member goals and IOR goals. Relational characteristics include the nature of the personal involvement of member organization representatives and the levels of interaction among members. Procedural characteristics of IORs include the degree of formality, the nature of exchange process, and the patterns of influence. Structural elements of the MD program that contribute to its success as a collaborative effort were identified through data analysis. Of these, a common vision and a common purpose were foremost. Reference notes are included, along with an appendix outlining the Intriligator IOR model, on which the research was based. (TE)

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TOWARD SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATOR EFFECTIVENESS: THE MD EXPERIMENT

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A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of

The American Educational Research Association

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Description of the Program

The field-based program is the result of an effort by five county school systems in the Baltimore metropolitan area and two campuses of the University of Maryland to collectively sponsor an off-campus, doctoral level, school-based administrator training program. Instruction in the program is a part of our regular faculty load. Planning for the program began during the 1978-79 academic year and the program became operational in September, 1979. The program is in its sixth year at this time and has experienced growing pains, crisis periods and moments of success which I would like to share with you this morning.

What distinguishes the MD program from other off-campus efforts with which you may be familiar is that it was designed to be a collaborative inter-organizational arrangement. Participating organizations shared a common interest in and concern for developing a program that would prepare effective school based administrators and whose content (or curriculum) would be applicable to the needs of practicing administrators in each of the participating school systems. Each of the parties - both schools and the university - had important contributions to make in both defining the characteristics of an effective school-based administrator and in determining an appropriate

set of competencies and skills that should be included in a training program. Schools would provide craft knowledge - what do administrators actually need to be able to do in order to function effectively in their counties. University trainers would provide knowledge of the theoretical under-pinnings that inform effective administrative practice. Thus, at the outset, program planners expressed a commitment to bringing these craft and research knowledge bases together in the interests of defining a quality, responsive training curriculum. At this point in our discussion, let me alert you to an important initial assumption made by all parties - the fusing of research and practice would occur on the university's turf; this was to be a university training program and the university had the authority to grant students the academic credential. I will discuss the importance of this assumption a little later on in this presentation.

Member organizations made a critical procedural decision to pursue their goals collaboratively. The following statement from the program's Policy Manual summarizes their understanding of this collaborative intention:

> "The program is designed to be a truly collaborative effort...it is the consensus of all representatives that efforts...should exemplify the best in collaborative decision-making throughout all stages of program development, implementation and evaluation.... (19/8, pp. 22-23).

Over the course of the program, understandings and interpretations of collaborative decision-making emerged and were redefined. However, the time and energy devoted to working out collaborative procedures was considered by participants to be an important investment that allowed the relationship to become both stable and mutually beneficial. Moreover, such procedural considerations allowed participants to deliberate regularly about refinements in the content of the program and about developing a common understanding of what consitutes an effective school-based administrator.

Thus, members of the planning committee who developed the Policy Manual shared both a common purpose - to offer a quality program that would have direct applicability to local school system practice - and a common vision - that the collective understandings of the participating organizations were necessary to identify critical elements in training effective school-based administrators. Collaboration was the procedure to be followed that would allow participants to realize both their common goal and their common vision.

Design of the Study

The focus of my study has been on the procedures member organizations developed and followed to achieve these two purposes: (1) first, to develop a relevant school-based administrator training

program; and (2) second, to identify and pursue procedures that would allow members to accomplish this goal collaboratively. Our interest was in determining the degree of member satisfaction with these two purposes at three critical points in the development of the program: initially, in the planning stage (1978), two years after program operations began (1981) and three years later (1984) after the first cycle of students were beginning to finish their degree requirements. Data sources included: extensive interviews with policy board representatives, CEO's, faculty and selected school system personnel and students; content analysis of documents and program evaluations; and observations of policy board meetings and sponsored events of the program. While formal interviews were conducted in 1981 and 1984, document analysis and observations took place from 1978-1984. These case study data are immensely rich. This paper concentrates on findings related to training effective administrators and to relevant aspects of the collaborative process.

Theoretical Framework

Educational collaboratives are becoming an increasingly important organizational arrangement wherein two or more independent organizations agree to pool their authority, resources and energies in order to achieve a goal or goals they desire. These arrangements, called inter-organizational relationships (IORs) in this paper, also appear under the names of collaboratives, cooperatives, coalitions and consortia. Studies of IORs have been conducted in the fields of health, social welfare, rural community development, municipal governments, business and rehabilitation, as well as in

education.[1] A bibliography of this work is available upon request.

The perspective guiding this work is that of inter-organizational theory. For the most part, IOR research has treated relationships among organizations as properties of organizations. Although that approach adds a dimension to organizational analysis, it fails to help us understand the inter-organizational field. My research focuses on inter-organizational behavior as a relational attribute, as well as an organizational property. The conceptual problem is how to think about the great variety of possible relations and transactions that may occur among different organizations that each have important resources to contribute to administrator training programs and that have agreed to join together to deliver these services. My research on voluntary inter-organizational relationships has identified several of these factors.[2]

In effective IORs, there is a defined interdependency among member organizations and a perceived commonality of purpose, goals, interests or clients that allows them to collaborate in joint programs. True collaboration, or shared decision-making, is the most difficult and most powerfully predictive element in the design and operation of an effective IOR. The major question becomes how can we structure and manage the interaction among IOR member organizations in order to insure collaboration. My IOR model directs attention to the pre-setting conditions that contribute to a decision to collaborate,

and then delineates structural, relational and procedural characteristics of successful IORs. In brief, structural characteristics of IORs include types of coordinating mechanisms; demographic characteristics (including similarity of mission, size, corporate health and geographic location); resource contributions; and congruence between member goals and IOR goals. Relational characteristics include the nature of the personal involvement of member organization representatives and the levels of interaction among members. Finally, procedural characteristics of IORs include the degree of formality of the relationships, the nature of the exchange process and the patterns of influence among member organizations. Appendix A contains an outline of this model.

Analysis of the Data

It was hypothesized that the success of university and school system partners in designing and conducting a collaborative school-based administrator training program was directly related to the extent to which the arrangement approximated features of successful IORs as defined by the research cited above. Data will be presented in this paper using that conceptual framework.

There were certain structural characteristics of the MD program that help to explain its ability to conduct a collaborative program. Both the university and the school systems articulated a commitment to the delivery of quality public educational services and

a recognition of the importance of the school-based administrator in that process. However, while the training of school leaders is the primary mission of the university department, it is only a part of the overall concerns of the public schools. Because individual organizational goals were complementary and not identical, partners had different degrees of commitment to the effort. Indeed, analysis of the data revealed that the schools were cooperating to help the university accomplish its mission in a way that would be more responsive to the needs of the school systems; however, the program was not as important to them, as it was to their unversity colleagues.

In addition, member organizations agreed that resource contributions to the program legitimately could include people, time and programs as well as monies. Their organizational cultures, as well as their public bureaucratic modi operandi, caused them to use a policy board as the IOR coordinating mechanism. The function of the policy board was to provide direction for the university program and to insure the input of all parties into the collaborative decision-making process. At present, both faculty and school leaders continue to favor the use of a policy board to coordinate program activities. Faculty observed that "we've got to have linkages"..."a capacity to render advice."..."A policy board composed of people who are knowledgeable about how their organization works." This view was shared by 85% of university respondents. Reflected in this language, of course, is the view that the university maintains control over the program and the schools "render advice" which may or may not be accepted; a loosely structured arrangement works well for that.

The majority of school leaders also talked about a loosely structured coordinating mechanism, but they were using this term differently than the university respondents. "The policy board mechanism will do"..."Face to face meetings in which consensus is achieved around broad policy issues is what works for us"... "The current policy board structure is loosely organized and functions well... this is the kind of organization that we need in this area, due to the Maryland way." Of course, "The Maryland way" refers to local autonomy issues. The view that the business of the schools must be under their own control is not new. However, the school leaders' need for a loosely coupled inter-organizational arrangement also reflected their concern that participation in the program not interfere with the requirements of their enabling legislations. These data are reflective of a common theme that permeates the data: while university and school leaders tend to use the same language to describe aspects of the Program, they actually mean different things. The significance to the IOR of this difference in meaning may be understood by the following comment made by a faculty respondent: "We need to decide...do we want to network or to collaborate? A network allows loose connections with partners; the systems may be too complex to allow true collaboration...maybe networking is the best we can do..."

Because of the need/desire of participants to maintain this loosely connected structure, it becomes even more important that member organizations devote important attention to other features of

IORs that have been identified in the research. These two major features cluster as "relational" and "procedural" characteristics. (See Appendix A.) They include the role of individual organizational representatives in shaping and promoting stability in the IOR; and attention to certain process issues attendant upon adapting a collaborative strategy to accomplish program activities. I will address each of these factors briefly and share with you participant perceptions of how they need to work.

There was general consensus that individuals who serve as organizational representatives on the policy board need to be top-level decision-makers who have the authority to involve their CEOs where necessary, who have the ability to garner system resources in the interests of the collaborative program and who are positioned to facilitate implementation of critical aspects of the training effort (e.g., providing meaningful internship experiences for students, helping to design dissertation projects that have meaning for the school systems and facilitating any follow-up that would allow for meaningful use of the results of the research efforts sponsored by the program). Indeed, several school leaders reported that research conducted by students was one of the major benefits that accrued to their organizations as a direct consequence of participation in the collaborative program. One deputy superintendent reported that "Sandra had completed her research on the assistant principal. I then appointed her to chair a committee of assistant principals and central office staff that is developing strategies for staff development based

on her work. Our system will change to respond to assistant principal needs identified by Sandra." There are more instances of success stories, all of which appear to be dependent upon the role that the school system policy board representative has agreed to play in behalf of the collaborative program.

However the extent to which school leaders are willing to pursue potential benefits that might accrue to their systems as a direct result of system personnel enrolling in the doctoral program is importantly dependent upon the level of trust that has developed between school and university IOR partners. By extension, then, here is another example of the university's capacity to improve its school-based administrator training program being directly dependent upon the dynamics of the collaborative process. In response to a question about whether there was a high, medium, or low level of trust among IOR partners, most faculty indicated that there was a medium level of trust, whereas the majority of the school leaders indicated that there was a high level of trust.

The factors that each party identified as contributing to the building of trust help to explain this difference. The trust level for school respondents was person-dependent; that is, "there is a continuity of individuals on the policy board, some of whom are personally committed"...and "previous interactions in other situations of organizational representatives have built high trust levels among the persons involved." On the other hand, faculty identified a different set of contributing factors: "there is no distrust at

present, because there is nothing at stake. There is no test of trust until there is something at stake"... and "in order to have trust among universities and school systems, you have to have a common view or goal. We don't have that. The field program is not the vehicle through which trust can be built." Indeed, using the faculty criteria for trust, school leaders probably would have re-assessed the extent to which trust is now present in the relationship. Again, here is another instance in which school and university participants are using the same words, but meaning different things.

There were important process issues that emerged from this study as being critical to the development of the collaborative program. IOR research indicates that the patterns of influence present in the arrangement strongly influence the ability of a collective activity to become truly collaborative - that is, to adopt a shared decision making process through all aspects of the program. There are three variables that interact to determine these patterns of influence: (1) domain consensus - that is, each member's organizational domain must be acknowledged and consensus reached on each member is prerogatives in defining IOR resources, goals and areas of expertise; (2) lines of authority - that is, the relationship is defined by decisions about sources of authority related to the IOR purpose and about established procedures for individual organizations to pursue additional authority; and (3) the use of power - that is, relationships must be built that cast the least in terms of individual member autonomy and power and that are not dependent upon the use of power and status differentials.

The patterns of influence in the MD program were both explicit and understood. For example, because school leaders agreed that the doctoral program was in the university's domain, they agreed not to seek final authority for making program-related decisions. School leaders indicated that they "...don't think that they should tell the university how to run the program. The university must deal with requirements. We don't know about those, but we are involved in things we know about"... and "We need open discussion about particular things and the policy board has done this ... schools should not approve courses... The university must be responsible, because it awards the degree." Similarly, faculty respondents indicated that "the university can command any decision it wants"... "the policy board does only those things that are brought to it... control is through the meeting agendas" and "the department makes all the important decisions... we determine what is to be taught and we get the monies." These comments by faculty and school leaders demonstrate that there was consensus among member organizations that the program belonged primarily to the university. That was acceptable because it had been agreed to up-front; the lines of authority had been explicitly stated. Interestingly enough, school leaders were comfortable with the university controlling procedures for conducting the program, because they did not believe that effective administrators could be <u>completely</u> trained by a university program. They were "sending their personnel to school" for broad understandings; however, graduates then needed to return to the systems, go through the system internship program and "learn how to

actually be an administrator"... or, "to learn administrative practices that work in our system."

Earlier I indicated that member organizations in the MD program articulated a common purpose (to offer a quality program that would be applicable to local school system practice) and a common vision (that the collective understandings of universities and school system were necessary to identify critical elements in the training program). Both the purpose and the vision were dramatically influenced by the patterns of influence present in the program. For example, school leaders and faculty agreed that traditional university administrator training programs did not bridge the gap between theory and practice, either because "the curriculum was not relevant to school system needs and interests" or because "the research conducted in those programs was not helpful to school systems." However, in response to a question about the extent to which the MD program had addressed these problems, there was divergent opinion between faculty and school leaders. Both respondent groups indicated that the field program was not any more "skills based or practical" than the campus program and that the program had not adequately defined the "product" that it wished to produce -- an effective school-based administrator. On the other hand, the field program was sponsoring research that was helpful to the school systems, had resolved problems of residency and access to campus, and had improved communication between the university and the schools. All of these issues, they reported, had not been addressed in the campus program.

In retrospect, as the data indicated, there was a significant difference between the articulated common purpose of the collaborative program, and what the program actually addressed. Moreover, member organizations anticipated a common vision of using their collective understandings to identify critical elements in the training program; however, once again the data indicated that they were using the same words to mean different things: School leaders indicated that they "...never conceptualized that the program would create an effective administrator." Indeed, "you need two levels of training to be an effective administrator...after the university, people need to go through school system principal training and be administrative interns in their school systems." In essence, school leaders believed that you could talk about combined university/school system understandings, but that such a program cannot be implemented solely by the university.

Summary

In sum, reaching agreement about elements of an effective school-based administrator training program is complicated by the fundamentally different belief systems of universities and school systems about each other's capacity to provide appropriate and relevant training experiences. One faculty member, who had recently been a superintendent in a county school system, offered a possible solution (which many other school leaders and faculty respondents also addressed):

> "We need to integrate the university doctoral program with the leadership training programs of the system...I'm not sure it can be done, but we need to provide academic credit for school system leadership training courses...Possible system courses that may be given academic credit include 'Administrative Policies and Practices in System X' and 'How Can A New Principal Deal With an Old Established Faculty'..."

Of course, developing a program that allows academic credit for school leadership courses would require that the university be allowed to have final approval of the content of these courses; however, respondents felt that that was not impossible.

Secondly, collaboration between universities and school systems requires that partners define themselves as inter-dependent around a common purpose and that they agree to participate in a shared decision-making process. The way in which the collaborative processes are defined and attended to during the program development stages determines the extent to which both immediate and long range benefits can accrue to member organizations. Despite MD program participants' contradictory basic assumptions about where students learn how to actually practice school-based administration, the program does provide a forum for exchange among leaders of craft and theoretical knowledge. It is this potential for exchange that may constitute the key to improving school-based administrator training efforts.

Most importantly, we do not yet have agreement about what constitutes an effective school-based administrator. Because we are still identifying important training areas, we need to have opportunities for on-going dialogue between all the interested parties. And this may be the greatest strength of the MD experiment -- that it paid enough attention to factors that contribute to successful collaborative efforts that it was able to maintain a continuing dialogue between school systems and the university at a time when both parties are re-evaluating how to train school system personnel to be effective leaders.

NOTES

[1]See for example: (1) C.S. Cates (1981). Industry-education collaboration for school improvement. (NIE No. 400-80-0103). San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development; (2) C.S. Cates, P.D. Hood, & S. McKibbin (1981). An exploration of interorganizational arrangements that support school improvement. San Francisco: Far West Lab; (3) W.M. Evan & R.C. Klemm (1980). Interorganizational relations among hospitals: A strategy, structure and performance model. Human Relations 33 (5); (4) J. Galaskiewcz & D. Shatin (1981). A dynamic study of change in a regional corporate network. American Sociological Review 46; (5) A.M. Huberman (1981). School-university collaboration supporting school improvement: Vol. I, The midwestern state teacher center network case. (NIE No. 400-79-0063). Washington, D.C.: The Knowledge Transfer Institute, the American University; (6) A.M. Huberman et. al. (1981). Interorganizational arrangements; An approach to educational practice improvement. Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization 3 (1); (7) S.V. Martorana & E. Kuhns (1981). Beyond the institution: Institutional research for inter-institutional action. Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research; (8) R. Soder & R.L. Andrews (1984). University/district collaboration on effective schools: A resource enhancement model. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association; (9) TDR Associates, Inc. (1981). Case studies of three urban university-school collaboratives mandated for the

improvement of educational practice, Vol. I (NIE No. 400-79-0064) Newton, MA: TDR Associates, Inc.; (10) J.E. Walter (1984). Staff development in the St. Louis public schools: An inter-organizational analysis. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association; and (11) R.K. Yin & M.K. Gwaltney (1981). Organizations collaborating to improve educational practice. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc.

[2]See for example the following writings by B.A. Intriligator: (1) The educational collaborative: An opportunity for school improvement, Rural Educator, September 1985, 6 (3); (2) Evaluating inter-organizational relationships. (ERIC ED 237553) Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 1983; Inter-organizational collaboration: A strategy for faculty development and organization renewal. Journal of Teacher Education, October 1982, 33 (5); (3) New ways of planning for new realities: The collaborative option. (ERIC ED 238198) Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, March 1982; (4) Creating conditions for successful collaboration. (ERIC ED 237475) Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Houston, February 1982; and (5) The educational collaborative: An exploratory study of the relationships between selected interorganizational behaviors and cooperative interaction among member school systems. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Boston University, 1978.

Appendix A

The Intriligator IOR Model

I. The Collaborative Arrangement

A. Structural Characteristics of the IOR

1. Demographic Characteristics of the Organization Set

a. organizational missions
b. location/proximity
c. age
d. size
e. corporate health

2. Assessment of Resources

a. legitimate member contributions, including people, time, programs and monies
b. availability of external sources of funds

3. Type of Coordinating Mechanism

a. continuum from a person-dependent connection to a new unit
b. choice of mechanism depends on IOR purpose

4. Degree of Congruence Between Member Goals and IOR Goals

a. similarity or complementarity of organizational missions
b. possibility of developing a superordinate goal for the IOR

B. Relational Characteristics of the IOR

1. Personal Involvement of Member Organization Representatives

a. role expectations and role congruence
b. personal commitment
c. level and nature of leadership
d. degree of CEO interest/energy over the IOR life cycle

2. Levels of Interaction

   a. integration of linkages among member organizations
   b. integration of linkages within member organizations
   c. complex and multiple organizational ties

C. Procedural Characteristics of the IOR

1. Degree of Formality

   a. extent to which member organizations have sanctioned the IOR
   b. degree of coordination of interactions within organizations

2. Features of the Exchange Process

   a. Standardization
      (1) units of exchange must be clearly defined
      (2) definition of how repetitious the units of exchange will be

   b. Intensity
      (1) number of frequency of joint interactions
      (2) amount or size of resources allocated the IOR

   c. Reciprocity
      (1) extent to which the terms of the exchange are reached mutually
      (2) belief of each member that their input will be valued and used

3. Patterns of Influence

   a. Domain Consensus
      (1) each organization's domain must be acknowledged
      (2) agreement on each member's areas of expertise; what each wishes to get out of the IOR and resources contributions.

   b. Lines of Authority
      (1) sources of authority in the relationship (how equal are the partners)
      (2) individual organization's pursuit of additional authority

b. Lines of Authority

(1) sources of authority in the relationship (how equal are the partners)

(2) individual organizations' pursuit of additional authority

c. Use of Power

(1) build relationships that cost the least in terms of individual member autonomy and power

(2) build relationships that are not dependent on the use of power and status differentials

II. Characteristics of Single Organizations That Decide to Collaborate

A. Organizational Health

1. viability of current mission
2. financial health
3. political conditions

B. Structural Characteristics

1. centralization, complexity, and homogenity of structure
2. degree of adaptability or innovativeness

C. Process Characteristics

1. decision-making processes
2. internal logic of the organization

D. Leadership

1. power and authority of the CEO
2. skill in shaping the form and substance of the organization's external logic
3. ability to initiate and adapt to change

III. Environmental Factors

A. Existence of Potential Resources

1. review of potential internal and external resources
2. using IOR expanded goals to attract resources not available to single member organizations

B. General Cooperative Environment

1. external incentives and supports for collaboration
2. existing or potential organizational incentives and supports for collaboration
3. organizational history of collaboration

C. Political and Economic Changes Over Time